

THE
RELIGION
OF
REASON.
AN
EXTRACT.



D U B L I N :

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RELIGION

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Y O U shall see Reason possessed of all that belongs to it. I will grant you much more than you imagine, in respect of Reason; I will grant it to have as great a Share in the good Things of Religion, as in the good Things of this Life; that it can assist the Soul, just as it can assist the Body; that it has the same Power and Virtue in the spiritual World, that it has in the natural World; that it can communicate to us as much of the one as of the other, and is of the same Use and Importance in the one as in the other. Can you ask more?

Man considered as a Member of this World, that is to have his Share in the Good that is in it, is a sensible and a rational Creature ; that is, he has a certain Number of Senses, as Seeing, Hearing, Tasting, Smelling, and Touching, by which he is sensible of that which the outward World, in which he is placed, can do to him, or communicate to him, he is sensible of what Kind and Degree of Happiness he can have from it ; besides these Organs of Sense, he has a Power or Faculty of reasoning upon the Ideas which he has received by these Senses. Now how is it, that this World, or the good Things of this World are communicated to Man ? How is he put in Possession of them ? To what Part of him are they proposed ? Are his Senses or his Reason the Means of his having so much as he has, or can have from this World ?

Now, here you must degrade Reason just as much as it is degraded by Religion. And as we say, that the good Things of Scripture and Religion are not proposed to our Reason ; so you must say, that the good Things of this World are not proposed to our Reason ; and as St. Paul says, *the natural Man cannot receive the Things of the Spirit of God, because they are spiritually discerned* ; so you must also say, the rational Man cannot receive the Things of this World, because they are to be sensibly received, that is by the Organs of Sense.

Thus must you necessarily set Reason as low, with respect to the Things of this World, as it is set with respect to the Things of the spiritual World. It is no more the Means of communicating the good Things of the one, than of communicating the good Things of the other.

It stands in the same Incapacity in one World, as in the other. For every one knows that we know no more, can receive no more, can possess no more of any thing that is communicable to us from this World, than

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than what we know, receive, and possess by our Senses, or that sensible Capacity that is in us, of having something communicated to us by the World. Sounds are only proposed to our Ears, Light to our Eyes; nothing is communicated to our Reason; no Part of the World hath any Communication with it. Reason therefore has no higher Office or Power in the Things of this World than in the Things of Religion. The World is only so far known, received, and possessed, as we receive and possess it by our Senses. And Reason stands by, as an impotent Spectator, only beholding and speculating upon its own Ideas and Notions of what has passed between the World and the sensible Part of the Soul.

And as this is the State of Man in this World, where he receives all the Good he can receive from it, by a Sensibility of his Nature, entirely distinct from his Faculty of Reasoning; so it is his State with regard to the spiritual World, where he stands only capable of receiving the invisible good Things of it, by a Sensibility of his Nature, or such a Capacity as lets the spiritual World into him, in the Manner as the natural is let into him in this Life. Religion therefore does no more Violence to your Reason, or rejects it in any other way, than as all the good Things of this Life reject it. It is not seeing, it is not hearing, it is not tasting and feeling the Things of this Life; it can supply the Place of no one of these Senses. Now it is only thus helpless and useless in Religion; it is neither seeing, nor hearing, tasting, nor feeling of spiritual Things; therefore in the Things of Religion, and in the Things of this World, it has one and the same Insignificancy. So that the Things of the Spirit of God belong not to Reason, cannot be known and received by it, for the same Reason, that the good Things of this World belong not to Reason, and cannot be known and received by it.

It is the Sensibility of the Soul that must receive what the World can communicate to it; it is the Sen-

sibility of the Soul that must receive what God can communicate to it ; Reason may follow after in either Case, and view through its own Glass what is done, but it can do no more. Reason may be here of the same Service to us, as it may be when we want any of the Enjoyments of this Life. It may take away a Cover from our Eyes, or open our Window-shutters, when we want the Light ; but it can do no more towards Seeing, than to make way for the Light to act upon our Eyes. This is all its Office and Ability in the Things of Religion, it may remove that which hinders the Sensibility of the Soul, or prevents the divine Lights acting upon it, but it can do no more.

Nothing is more plain than that our Goodness bears no Proportion to our intellectual Abilities of Reason ; every one sees this, and yet no more than this need be seen, to give us the fullest Demonstration that natural Reason has no Connexion with our Salvation, nor can be the proper Cause of it.

Hence we see that learned and acute rational Philosophers are often Atheists ; and those that can demonstrate the Foundation of Virtue, and paint every Office of it, are Rakes and Debauchees, and will sell every Appearance of practical Virtue for a Salary of so much a Year ; whilst those that seem to have little of intellectual Accomplishments are virtuous and honest, have a Taste and Relish for every practical Virtue.

The natural Love or Affection of Relations, bears no Proportion to our rational Abilities to speak or write of them.

A Parent that is of too refined an Understanding to content himself with the Morals of the Gospel, or its low way of making Men good, and that wants to be entertained with a Virtue of more mathematical Exactness, is often content with the Demonstration, and so remains deficient in the plainest Duties of domestic Affection ; when the poor Labourer or Mechanick, that

that knows not what you mean by a Definition, has all the solid Love and Affection that becomes a good Relation.

All this, and much more, which you and every one may think for himself of the same Kind, is a sufficient Proof, that the Ground of Goodness in every Man, is something entirely distinct from our natural Faculties of Reason and Speculation. And the Reason is plain, because this Faculty of Speculating and Arguing, is only the Activity of the Mind upon its own Images and Ideas, and is only the same bare Activity, whatever the Images be that exercise it; it has nothing of the Nature of the Images that it views, nor gets the Nature of them because it views them; as it does not become dark, when it considers the Nature, Causes, and Effects of Darkness, nor becomes light when it reasons about it; so neither is it Religion, nor gets any thing of the Nature of Religion when it is wholly taken up in making Descriptions and Definitions of it.

If the Needle touched with the Loadstone was an intelligent Being, it could reason and make Definitions of itself, of Attraction, and of the Loadstone; but it would be easy to see, that the Attraction in the Needle, or the Virtue of the Loadstone was something in its whole Nature really different from this reasoning about it: and that this Reasoning and Defining had no relation to this Attraction, nor would ever be the more like it, for its reasoning upon it, though it continued ever so long, or improved ever so much in its Descriptions of it, but would always be at the same Distance from it, and could have nothing of its Nature in it. But now if this reasoning Faculty in the Needle should pretend that the Needle need not be drawn by an inward Attraction, that it need not be unfixed, or delivered from any outward Impediments of its turning to the Loadstone, because this reasoning Faculty was its true and proper Attraction, being full of Ideas and Definitions of it, you would then have a plain Example

ple of your Practice, in taking natural Reason to be true Religion, and to have the Nature and Power of something that carries the Soul to God.

If the Needle loses its Attraction, its Communication with the Loadstone is at an End ; and though it reasons never so long about it, it is still at the same Distance from it.

So if the Soul loses its Instinct of Goodness, its Attraction to God, all its Reasonings and Definitions about God and Goodness are of no Use to carry it to God, but it must lie in an absolute State of Separation from him, if its Attraction, its inward Tendency to God is lost ; Reason, or a Faculty of reasoning upon the moral Habitudes and Relations of Things and Persons, or upon the moral Proportion of Actions, has no more of the Nature and Power of Religion in it, than so much Reasoning upon the Relations of Squares and Triangles. And if a Man had this Religion of Reason only when he was dreaming in Sleep, it would be the same good Thing to him, as it is to those who make it their Religion when they are awake.

For the Good of Religion is like the Good of Food and Drink to an hungry and thirsty Creature ; and if instead of giving such a one Bread and Wine, or Water, you should teach him to seek for Relief by attending to clear Ideas of the Nature of Bread, of different ways of making it, and the relation it hath to Water, he would be left to die in the want of Sustenance ; just so your Religion of Reasoning leaves the Soul to perish in the want of Religion. And as such a Man would have no more Benefit from such Reasoning about the Relation that Bread had to Water, whether it was the Reasoning of a Dream, or the Reasoning of a Man awake, because either way he is kept under the same want of that which was to preserve his Life ; so whether a Man has the Religion of Reason only when he is asleep, or when he is awake, is the same Thing, because either way he is kept under the same want of that

that which can alone preserve the Life of the Soul. For the Good that is in Religion, or the Good that we want to receive by it, is no more within the Reach of our Reason, nor to be communicated to us by it, than the Good of Food is in the Reach of our Reason, or can be communicated to us by it. And yet as a Man may have the Good of Food much assisted and secured to him by the right Use of Reason, though Reason has not the Good of Food in it; so a Man may have the Good of Religion much assisted and secured by the right Use of Reason, though Reason has not the Good of Religion in it.

And as a Man ought not to be accused as an Enemy to the true Use of Reasoning about Food, because he declares that Reason is not Food, nor can supply the Place of it; so a Man ought not to be accused as an Enemy to the Use of Reasoning in Religion, because he declares that Reason is not Religion, nor can supply the Place of it.

We have no Want of Religion but so far as we want to better our State. This is the true Ground of Religion, to have something communicated to us which alters our State for the better, and puts us in Possession, or makes us Partakers of what we wanted, in such a Manner and Degree as we wanted it. Now every Thing in Life has its Degree of Life in and from God, it lives and moves and has its Being *in God*.

And if this be the Truth of the Matter (and who can deny it) then we are certain that nothing can be our Good in Religion but that which communicates to us something of God which betters our State. But this Light of Reason, or the reasoning Faculty of the Mind, has no Contrariety to the Vices of the Heart, it neither kills them, nor is killed by them, as *Pride, Vanity, Hypocrisy, Envy, or Malice* don't take away from the Mind its geometrical Skill; so a Man may be most mathematical in his Demonstrations of the Religion of Reason, when he has extinguished every good Senti-

Sentiment of his Heart, and be the most zealous for its Excellency and Sufficiency, when he has his Passions in the most disordered State. But in that Attraction to God which is common to all Mankind in and through *Jesus Christ*, all is contrary. As it is a Gift and Grace of God, so it is a real Life, a Sentiment of the Heart, and so far as it grows and increases in us, so far it destroys all that is bad and corrupt within us, it has the same Contrariety to all Vices of the Heart, that Light has to Darkness, and must either suppress or be suppressed by them.

You are forced to know and feel, whether you will or no, that God has a certain secret Power within you, which is watching every Opportunity of saying something to you, either of yourself, the Vanity of the World, or the Guilt and Consequence of Sin. This is the Instinct of Goodness, Attraction of God or Witness of himself in the Soul of every Man, which without Arguments and Reasonings rises up in the Soul, and would do some Good to it, if not quenched and resisted by the Noise and Hurry either of Pleasure or Business.

And this is every one's natural Religion, or call to God and Goodness, which is faithful to every Man, and is the Foundation of all the Virtue and Goodness that shall be brought forth in him. Thus is *Christ* the Light which lighteth every Man that cometh into the World.

Now when I speak of the Instinct of the Heart or Attraction to God, I have not only the Authority of Scripture, but every Man's own Experience on my Side; that Distinction between the Head and the Heart, which every one knows how to make, plainly declares for all that I have said; it shews, that the State and Tendency of our Heart is all that is good within us; and that the Reasonings and Speculations of the Head, are only an empty Shew and Noise that is made in the Outside of us.

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For that which we mean by the Heart plainly speaks thus much ; it is a kind of Life and Motion within us, which every one knows contains all that is good or bad in us ; that we are that which our Hearts are, let us talk, and reason, and dispute what we will about Goodness and Virtue ; and that this State of our Heart is as distinct from, and independent of, all Speculations of our reasoning Faculties, as it is distinct from, and independent of, all the Languages in which a Scholar can reason and speculate upon it. And if a Man should say, that the Excellency and Sufficiency of natural Religion consisted in knowing all the Languages in which Virtue, Goodness, and Religion are expressed by different Sounds and Characters, he would have said as much Truth, and as well grounded, as he who places the Excellency and Sufficiency of natural Religion in the many Arguments and Demonstrations which Reason can raise about it.

For all Reasoning and Speculation stand on the Outside of the Heart, in the same superficial Manner as all Languages do.

For our Heart is our Manner of Existence, or the State in which we feel ourselves to be ; it is an inward Life, a vital Sensibility, which contains our Manner of feeling what, and how we are ; it is the State of our Desires and Tendencies, of inwardly seeing, hearing, tasting, relishing, and feeling that which passes within us ; it is that to us inwardly, with regard to ourselves, which our Senses of Seeing, Hearing, Feeling, are with regard to Things that are without or external to us.

Now as Reason is a superficial and insignificant Thing with respect to our outward Senses, unable to add any thing to our Hearing, and Seeing, &c. or to be the true Power and Life of them ; so it is equally superficial and insignificant with respect to the inward Sensibility of the Heart, or its Seeing, Feeling, &c.
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and much more unable to add to or mend the State of the Heart, or become the Life and Power of its Motions by its Arguings about them.

And therefore to seek for the Religion or Perfection of the Heart in the Power of our Reason, is as groundless and absurd, and against the Nature of Things, as to seek for the Perfection and Strength of our Senses in the Power of our Reason.

I appeal to every Man in the World for the Truth of all this; for every Man has the fullest inward Conviction, that his Heart is not his Reason, nor his Reason his Heart, but that the one is as different from the other in its whole Nature as Pain, and Joy, and Desire are different from Definitions of them; and that as a thousand Definitions of Joy and Desire, will not become that Desire and Joy itself; so a thousand Definitions of Religion will not become Religion itself, but be always at the same Distance from it, as Speculations upon our Passions are from the Nature of them. You know, not by Hearsay, Reasoning, or Books, but by inward Sentiment, that your Reason can be very nicely religious, very strict in its Descriptions of Goodness, at the same Time that the Heart is a mere Libertine, sunk into the very Dregs of Corruption: On the other Hand, you know that when your Reason is debauched with Arguments, is contending for Prophaneness, and seems full of Proof that Piety is Superstition, your Heart at the same Time has often a Virtue in it that dissents from all that you say.

Now all this Proof that the State of Reason is not the State of your Heart, is the same Proof that Reason is not the Power or Strength of our Religion, because what our Heart is, that is our Religion; what belongs to our Heart that belongs to our Religion; which never had nor can have any other Nature, Power, or Perfection, than that which is the Nature, Power and Perfection of our Heart.

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The least stirring of this inward Principle, or Power of Life, is of more Value than all the Activity of our Reason, which is only a painter of dead Images, which leave the Heart in the same State of Death and Emptiness of all Goodness in which they find it.

Therefore, my dear Friend, know the Place of your Religion, turn inwards, listen to the Voice of Grace, the Instinct of God, and let your *Heart* pray to God that all that is good and holy in him may touch, and stir, and revive all that is capable of Goodness in you. Your Heart wants nothing but God, and nothing but your Heart can receive him. This is the Seat of Religion.

We are apt to consider Grace only as some Working of our Heart, that checks us, and so we are rather afraid, than fond of it. But if we looked upon it as it really is, so much of God within us striving to raise us from the Dead, we should love and adhere to it as our happy Guide to Heaven.

It may not be improper here to speak a Word or two of the true Ground and Nature of Enthusiasm, which some suppose peculiar to Religion. In Will, Imagination, and Desire consists the Life of every intelligent Creature; and as every intelligent Creature is its own Self-mover, so every intelligent Creature has Power of kindling and inflaming its Will, Imagination, and Desire as it pleases, with Shadows, Fictions, or Realities; with Things earthly or spiritual, temporal or eternal. And this kindling of the Will, Imagination, and Desire, when raised into a ruling Degree of Life, is properly that which is to be understood by Enthusiasm. And therefore Enthusiasm is, and must be, of as many Kinds as those Objects are, which can kindle and enflame the Wills, Imaginations, and Desires of Men. And to appropriate Enthusiasm to Religion, is the same Ignorance of Nature, as to appropriate Love to Religion; for Enthusiasm, a kindled,
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inflamed Spirit of Life, is as common, as universal, as essential to human Nature, as Love is; it goes into every kind of Life as Love does, and has only such a Variety of Degrees in Mankind as Love hath. And here we may see the Reason, why no People are so angry at religious Enthusiasts, as those that are deepest in some Enthusiasm of another Kind.

He whose Fire is kindled from the Divinity of *Tully's Rhetorick*, who travels over high Mountains to salute the dear Ground that *Marcus Tullius Cicero* walked upon; whose noble Soul would be ready to break out of his Body, if he could see a Desk, a Rostrum from whence *Cicero* had poured forth his Thunder of Words, may well be unable to bear the Dulness of those, who go on Pilgrimages only to visit the Sepulchre whence the Redeemer of the World rose from the Dead. He whose heated Brain is all over painted with the antient Hieroglyphicks; who knows how and why they were this and that, better than he can find out the Customs and Usages of his own Parish; who can clear up every Thing that is doubtful in Antiquity, and yet be forced to live in Doubt about that which passes in his own Neighbourhood; who has found out the Sentiments of the first Philosophers with such Certainty, as he cannot find out the real Opinion of any of his Contemporaries; he that has gone thus high into the Clouds, and dug thus deep into the Dark for these glorious Discoveries, may well despise those Christians as Brain-sick Visionaries, who sometimes find a moral and spiritual Sense in the bare Letter and History of Scripture Facts.

It matters not what our Wills and Imaginations are employed about; wherever they fall and love to dwell, there they kindle a Fire, and that becomes the Flame of Life, to which every thing else appears as dead, and insipid, and unworthy of Regard. Hence it is that even the poor Species of Fops and Beaux have a Right to be placed among Enthusiasts, though capable of no other Flame than that which is kindled by Taylors and Peruke-makers.

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ruke-makers. All refined Speculatists, as such, are great Enthusiasts; for being devoted to the Exercise of their Imaginations, they are so heated into a Love of their own Ideas, that they seek no other *Summum Bonum*. The Grammarian, the Critick, the Poet, the Connoisseur, the Antiquary, the Philosopher, the Politician, are all violent Enthusiasts, though their Heat is only a Flame from Straw, and therefore they all agree in appropriating Enthusiasm to Religion. All ambitious, proud, self-conceited Persons, especially if they are great Scholars, are violent Enthusiasts, and their Enthusiasm is an inflamed Self-love, Self-esteem, and Self-seeking. This Fire is so kindled in them, that every Thing is nauseous and disgusting to them, that does not offer Incense to that Idol which their Imagination has set up in themselves. All Atheists are dark Enthusiasts; their Fire is kindled by a Will and Imagination turned from God into a gloomy Depth of Nothingness, and therefore their Enthusiasm is a dull burning Fire, that goes in and out through Hopes and Fears of they know not what to come. All professed Infidels are remarkable Enthusiasts, they have kindled a bold Fire from a few faint Ideas, and therefore they are all Zeal, and Courage, and Industry, to be constantly blowing it up. A *Tindal* and a *Collins* are as inflamed about nothing, as a *St. Bennet* and *St. Francis* with the Doctrines of the Gospel.

Enthusiasts therefore we all are, as certainly as we are Men; and consequently, Enthusiasm is not a Thing blameable in itself, but is the common Condition of human Life in all its States; and every Man that lives either well or ill, is that which he is, from that prevailing Fire of Life, or driving of our Wills and Desires, which is properly called Enthusiasm. You need not then go to a Cloyster, the Cell of a Monk, or to a Field Preacher to see Enthusiasts, they are every where, at Balls and Masquerades, at Court and the Exchange; they sit in all Coffee-houses, and cant in all Assemblies. The Beau and the Coquet have no Magick but where they meet Enthusiasts, The
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Mercer, the Taylor, the Bookseller have all the
 Wealth from them. The Works of a Bayle, a Shaft-
 bury, and Lucretius, would lose Four-fifths of their at-
 tracting Beauties had they not keen Enthusiasts for the
 Readers.

That which concerns us therefore, is only to see with what Materials our prevailing Fire of Life is kindled, and in what Species of Enthusiasts it truly places us. For either the Flesh or the Spirit; either the Wisdom from above, or the Wisdom of this World, will have its Fire in us; and we must have a Life that governs us either according to the Sensuality of the Beast, the Subtilty of the Serpent, or the Holiness of the Angel.



F I N I S.

